

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

C O N F I D E N T I A L RANGOON 001090

SIPDIS

STATE FOR EAP/BCLTV; PACOM FOR FPA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/24/2014

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [BM](#) [NLD](#)

SUBJECT: NLD MP ARRESTS: PETITION DRIVE FALLOUT?

REF: A. RANGOON 1035

[1](#)B. RANGOON 924

Classified By: CDA, a.i. Ron McMullen for Reasons 1.4 (b,d)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: In mid-August the Burmese regime rounded up nine members and supporters of the National League for Democracy, including two MPs-elect, at several upcountry locations. NLD leaders believe that the arrests are in retaliation for the party's ongoing petition drive to release NLD leaders Aung San Suu Kyi and U Tin Oo and to reopen NLD offices. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (SBU) O/a August 11, military intelligence (OCMI) agents arrested three NLD members and supporters in Lashio (Shan State) on trumped up charges of importing unlicensed electronic equipment from China for their local retail business. The charges, under Section 51 of the Export and Import Control Act, carry a potential sentence of 3 to 5 years, plus fines.

[1](#)3. (C) Among those rounded up in Lashio was U Than Htay, an NLD Member-elect of Parliament. U Than Htay is a well-known lawyer who has frequently served as the NLD's liaison with ethnic minority groups in northeast Burma. He provided ASSK with substantial logistical and political support for her ill-fated May 2003 trip through the region, which ended in an SPDC-instigated ambush in Sagaing Division.

[1](#)4. (SBU) O/a August 16, OCMI officials arrested six NLD members and supporters in Myaungmya (Irrawaddy Division), including NLD Member-elect of Parliament U Aung Kyin. MI charged the group with distributing "illegal videos" from their small video rental shops. Under Burma's "Television and Video Law," the six face up to two years in prison. (Note: Most video shops in Burma offer bootleg copies of popular foreign films, which the regime considers illegal unless vetted by SPDC censors--a costly and cumbersome undertaking. Enforcement of the law is rare, and usually a pretext for politically motivated harassment. End note.)

[1](#)5. (C) Comment: NLD sources told Emboffs on August 24 that they believe the arrests are a response by the SPDC to the party's ongoing petition drive (refs A and B). Although the regime has turned a blind eye to the modest petition effort in Rangoon, OCMI has implemented intimidating surveillance at upcountry signing locations and the USDA, the regime's mass-member organization, has threatened violence against petition organizers. The two MPs-elect arrested in mid-August are both divisional NLD leaders, responsible for organizing local petition efforts. End Comment.
McMullen